

SISSETON AND WAHPETON INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

TRANSMITTING

A copy of a communication from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and also a copy of a report by United States Indian Agent William McKusick, Sisseton Agency, S. Dak., relative to the destitute condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians.

JULY 17, 1890.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, July 15, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of a communication of 14th instant from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and accompanying copy of a report from United States Indian Agent William McKusick, Sisseton Agency, S. Dak., relative to the destitute condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians, and to the urgent necessity of ratifying the agreement with those Indians now before Congress.

Very respectfully,

JOHN W. NOBLE,
Secretary.

The SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D. C., July 14, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith two copies of a letter from the United States Indian agent, Sisseton Agency, S. Dak., in relation to the destitute condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians living and having allotments on the Lake Traverse Reservation, and to request that one of them be forwarded to the House of Representatives with a view of showing that body the urgent necessity of ratifying the agreement with those Indians now before it.

Very respectfully,

T. J. MORGAN,
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

SISSETON AGENCY, S. DAK., June 25, 1890.

SIR: I have the honor of calling attention to the condition of the Sisseton and Wahpeton tribe of Indians living and having allotments on the Lake Traverse Reservation, South Dakota. My annual report, together with all other reports and references, show that this section of country suffered severely by drought during the summer of 1889, and that nearly all of the crops on the Lake Traverse Reservation were blasted and dried up. The Indians of this reservation having taken allotments in 1887 began to make quite an effort at farming in 1888 and 1889, and used up all the means they had in opening up land, building, etc., and became almost entirely dependent upon their crops for a living.

I found these Indians so poor and destitute in the fall of 1889, after the drought of that season, that I immediately reported their condition, and the honorable Secretary of the Interior at once authorized me to expend a sum not exceeding \$2,000 in the purchase of flour, pork, and beans for the relief of the destitute. Said provisions were purchased in November last, and have been carefully issued as directed, and there are no further provisions for these destitute people. These Indians are in want of provisions. Their destitution presses them so hard that the few trees that should be left to grow are being cut and hauled away to purchase something to live on. They are digging the wild turnips, and I often hear of ponies and oxen being sold for their value to obtain provisions for their families. The agency physician, after visiting the sick, often reports the destitution and poverty of the families. These Indians have but few resources for obtaining the necessities of life. They obtain a limited amount of fish from the lakes, and this is all the wild game on this reservation. There is but little timber, which is located around the lakes and in the ravines, and this is wrongfully being cut from necessity, as before stated.

A very few Indian men can get employment among the whites, as they are not that far advanced in civilization to command much pay as laborers. The old chief Renville and many of the leading men of the tribe have visited me of late, and called my attention to the destitution of the people. They say that if the tribe has anything coming to it from the Government from any source whatever, that it is the earnest desire of all that sufficient supplies and provisions be purchased and issued to the tribe to relieve them from their destitution and poverty. These leading Indians apply for food for the tribe and insist that such destitution and poverty should not be allowed to continue. They say that a small payment now will do more good than a large one after many of them have died from destitution and want. They despair of the relief from the bill now before Congress for the payment of back annuities, and earnestly apply for the earliest assistance that can be obtained.

In view of all that is heretofore represented and the uncertainty of the payment of their annuities, I earnestly recommend that \$5,000 be expended in the purchase of flour, pork, and beans for the destitute Indians of the Lake Traverse Reservation, South Dakota, and be issued in such quantities and under such restrictions as the honorable Secretary of the Interior may direct. This would furnish relief for all immediate wants, and the future might place them in a more prosperous situation.

Very respectfully,

WILLIAM MCKUSICK,
United States Indian Agent.

Hon. T. J. MORGAN,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.